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ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Letter dated 27 October 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In connection with the statement made by the Muslim representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Third Committee of the General Assembly on 18 October 1993 on the agenda item "Elimination of racism and racial discrimination", which is replete with untrue, malicious qualifications and unsubstantiated allegations, I have the honour to state the following.

The Muslim representative pretends to represent Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, in view of the situation on the ground in this former Yugoslav Republic, the structure of the participants in the Geneva negotiations where representatives of all three peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina participate equally as three delegations, as well as the fact that all three sides in Bosnia and Herzegovina have accepted the constitutional arrangements, deprives him of the legitimacy to represent also the Serbs and Croats in the former Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Muslim representative obviously overlooks the latest position of the major international factors, including even the United Nations, that what is at stake in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a civil war, which negates all charges of alleged outside aggression by the "Serbian and Montenegrin forces". However, not the slightest reference is made to the presence of the regular units of the Army of the Republic of Croatia, on which there are United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) reports and whose withdrawal has been demanded in the resolutions of the Security Council.

If the Muslim representative wishes to engage in the assessment of genocide against the Muslims and Catholics and pretends to speak on behalf of the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the question is why he does not mention the repeated genocide against the Serbs about which there is growing awareness in the world

public. How does he explain the fact that the Muslims and Catholics have recently been at war and that the Bosnian Muslims have been fighting each other lately?

We hope that the figure of "2.2 million displaced Bosnians" referred to by the Muslim representative also includes 250,000 Serbs and over 50,000 Muslims who found refuge in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the alleged aggressor in Bosnia. That would be the first time in history that the victims of aggression found shelter in the aggressor State.

In regard to the destruction of cultural landmarks and religious objects, in the interest of truth we would like to remind the Muslim representative that in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, over 100 sacral facilities of the Serbian Orthodox Church have been destroyed, mostly in areas not affected by the war. Mr. Sacirbey intentionally conceals not only the present atrocities suffered by the Serbs at the hands of the Muslims but also the fact that by systematically razing the monuments marking the places where horrendous genocide was committed against the Serbs in the Second World War, an attempt is made to wipe out the very memory of those events.

It is also evident that in blaming "certain policies" for the tragic humanitarian situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Muslim representative accuses precisely the Muslim leader Alija Izetbegovic, who, by refusing to sign the latest peace proposal, is directly responsible for such a situation. As for the humanitarian situation, we would like to point out that the UNPROFOR reports unambiguously indicate that the conflicts between the Croats and the Muslims, as well as the Muslims opening fire on UNPROFOR convoys, are reasons why the humanitarian assistance is not reaching those in need.

The international community is investing efforts to put an end to the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a peaceful way and through political negotiations. Those efforts would certainly not benefit from lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia and Herzegovina, considered to be "immoral" by the Muslim representative. Invoking the right to self-defence would make sense only in case of aggression in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in the case of civil war providing arms to one side only does not have any political or moral justification.

The Muslim representative is certainly well aware of the fact that the representatives of the Serbian and Croatian people have left the "democratically elected Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was supposed to maintain a 500-year-old tradition of pluralism and multi-culture". Therefore the logical question arises, on whose behalf and with what goals in mind is this Government acting? It is incomprehensible to invoke that tradition, which for the Serbian people in those areas is connected to the memories of slavery under the Ottoman Empire. Thus, any reference to Bosnian statehood of that time is inconceivable, which is confirmed by historical facts since the "Bosnian pashadom" was just one of the administrative units of the Ottoman Empire, without any particular autonomy, and it is therefore surprising to take the period of the Turkish occupation of the then sovereign Serbian States as a basis for statehood. The thesis of the multi-cultural interweaving of life in those areas is brought into question also by the words of the Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andric, who said that in Bosnia "three clocks are showing three different times", as well as by the